

**St. Mary's Academy Charter School
Beeville, Texas**



TRANSCRIPT: "EXTENDED LEARNING TIME"

STAN SIMONSON, PRINCIPAL/SUPERINTENDENT: Now as a charter school when we opened, we asked the parents, "What are the key concerns that you have?" And one of their key concerns was we don't want to lose the before and after school care. The tutorial part of the program can come out of Title I and state comp ed money, so that part is paid for with that. We do write grants to other small foundations. We have some individuals who've come up with the money to pay for some of the Lego work that is done on the weekends. We have another foundation that pays for the gymnastics and so on.

Some students, if they're failing, it's mandatory. They don't really get a choice. But we've had real good response from the parents. I think they feel if we're willing to take the child, they're willing to bring them. A lot of our kids this is their home. They enjoy it. In fact we have some kids it's hard to get them to go home. They want to call, and I've had many of them say, "Well, can't you all just stay?" Or they'll ask one of us, "How late are you staying today?"

What I tell the teachers from the budget perspective is that we have x number of dollars to pay for tutoring and after school. We have to offer it all year. If we come to the end of April, we still have to provide the care and we won't be able to pay, so let's together make sure that we spread it out and they're very fair, nobody tries to get the system. We think the longer the kids stay in school, the more they learn.

NANCY CAVALLIN, SCIENCE TEACHER, BEFORE AND AFTER COORDINATOR:

Whether we had the grant or not we went ahead and kept the kids after school, and in some of our programs we have art, guitar, music, cooking classes. We start off the afternoon though, with homework center and tutorials. Once they finish with that then they get to go into the fun things. We think it's very important for them to have the fine arts, the music, because it helps to enhance their learning. They've proven scientifically that it helps make both sides of the brain work together more efficiently. So we've tried to implement that into our after school program.

Saturday tutorials—half the school would like to come to that because it's a more relaxed atmosphere. We usually run it from 9 to 2. We have two of our teachers on campus that will come in at 7:30, because even on Saturdays we have parents that have to work. The rest of us that are going to be working with the tutorials usually show up at 8:30 or 9 o'clock. The students have already been here doing some AR Reading or homework that they know they need to catch up on or something and they're kept busy. By the time we get here we start into our lessons.

We try to work out a schedule where each teacher gets them for about an hour, hour and a half then we swap them around. At lunch we serve 'em pizza. They love the pizza. Then we take them outside to play for about 30 minutes and then we bring them back in and that's usually

when most of the teachers have finished their tutorials but in science I can still pull them in there and do hands-on experiments. So they're still getting tutorials but they don't realize it. They think they're just having fun.

I can tell you that the effect the after-school program and Saturday school program has had [is that] the students that have trouble keeping up are able to come and catch up, and get more personalized instruction. If there's a re-teach situation needing to be done, then that's the time that we can do it in a more relaxed atmosphere. We have probably a hundred to a hundred and fifty students that stay after school every day. On Saturdays it ranges from a dozen kids to sixty. We've even had as many as eighty kids come back on Saturdays. Some are required to come up and stay for tutorials but many of them aren't required. They just want to come get the extra help, or get caught up.

ALICE WHITLEY, READING COORDINATOR, K – 3: I do encourage my teachers, particularly the ones that are staying to work with children, to use that as a tutorial time; it counts. It's a quiet time. It's a 30 - 40 minute block a time that they're not gonna get at home. That's what we found to be the best and, our students, we've noticed their homework is now complete. They feel better about themselves; they're coming to class prepared the next day. It has seemed to work, and everybody works really well. That's the other thing that I think is so nice, if a faculty member all of a sudden has a dental appointment or a family emergency where normally they would have stayed for tutorials, I've told them, "Ask someone, 'Would you be willing to cover for me today?'" and I've never heard anybody say no. So everybody feels responsible for these children, not only during our normal school hours but after school also.

NANCY CAVALLIN, SCIENCE TEACHER, BEFORE AND AFTER COORDINATOR: What I noticed on the grades—by having the after-school program and the Saturday schools, they increased tremendously. I just sent some information to a lady in Austin that was interested in our data and just on one test that I pulled the data down from the beginning to now the grades have increased two or three grade levels in some cases, with just having the more personalized attention.

VOICE OF A PARENT: It's great, my kids just wanna come to Saturday school regardless if they need it or not. I come to pick up my kid at 4 o'clock and he sends me home because he don't wanna go.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER: The before- and after-school program is our attempt also as a school board and a school to address the entire student. Before they actually get to the classroom we try to meet their needs. After they leave the classroom we try to meet their needs. It's student oriented so that if the child comes early then they're fed and they're taken care of, they're not alone and after school they don't go home to an empty house. They're actually taken care of and in a sense watched over and loved. So it's not just the academic classroom setting but also the whole family setting before and after school that really helps nurture the child—a really important part of a whole school system.